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ABSTRACT

Deng Xiaopeng's rise to leadership in the People's Republic of China has been accompanied by massive economic and structural reforms. Some claim that these reforms led to the rise of the pro-democracy student movements of 1987 and 1989, and there has been a notable amount of scholarly investigation into their political and economic consequences. Deng and his pre-Tiananmen protege, Zhao Ziyang, employed a variety of rhetorical strategies that were designed to justify and legitimate the reforms in the face of orthodox Marxist opposition. The catch phrase, "primary stage of socialism," is a redefinition of orthodox Marxist theory which enabled the reforms to continue in the face of Chinese cultural constraints on political rhetoric. It enabled the reform faction in China to demonstrate loyalty to orthodox Marxism, while introducing quasi-capitalistic measures into the centrally planned Chinese economy. Part of the reason for the failure of the reforms was the inability to fully legitimate the reform program without a complete revamping of Marxist orthodoxy. Any future challenge to the status quo in China will either have to demonstrate a linkage to traditional marxist theory or overcome the theory's stronghold on Chinese society. (Fifty notes are included.) (SG)

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Student Paper

The Primary Stage of Socialism: Marxism Redefined in Contemporary Chinese Political Rhetoric

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ABSTRACT

Deng Xiaopeng's rise to leadership in the People's Republic of China has been accompanied by massive economic and structural reforms. This essay examines the rhetorical strategies employed by Deng and his pre-Tiananmen protege, Zhao Ziyang, to justify and legitimate the reforms in the face of orthodox Marxist opposition. It is the argument of this paper that the catch phrase, "primary stage of socialism", is a redefinition of orthodox Marxist theory which enabled the reforms to continue in the face of Chinese cultural constraints on political rhetoric. It enabled the reform faction in China to demonstrate loyalty to orthodox Marxism, while introducing quasi-capitalistic measures into the centrally-planned Chinese economy. Finally, the essay argues that part of the reason for the failure of the reforms was the inability to fully legitimate the reform program without a complete revamping of Marxist orthodoxy.

Since the rise of Deng Xiaopeng to the position of China's supreme leader, he has led the People's Republic of China in a long and arduous period of economic reform. These reforms have been massive and sustained, and hence have been dubbed "China's Second Revolution".[1] The recent reforms of the Soviet Union have far overshadowed China's steps at reform, but as recently as two years ago, Deng's reform program was seen as a model for that of the Soviet Union.[2]

There can be little doubt that these reforms have had profound implications upon the existing social structures and institutions of the Peoples' Republic of China. Some claim that these reforms led to the rise of the pro-democracy student movements of 1987 and 1989[3], and there has been a notable amount of scholarly investigation into their political and economic consequences. To the intercultural communication researcher, these reforms provide a direct look into societal change in China, and the rhetorical strategies that have accompanied the changes give significant insight into variations across cultures in the implementation of policy. This data is invaluable for developing a true understanding of cultural variation in communication.[4]

As stated previously, Deng Xiaopeng, China's paramount leader, is primarily responsible for the implementation of the reforms.[5] Throughout the

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[1]Harry Harding, China's Second Revolution, (Washington, D. C,: The Brookings Institution, 1987); Bian Fa, "Reform-China's Second Revolution", China Reconstructs, Vol. xxxvi, #10, October, 1987, p. 16.

[2]Sophie Quinn-Judge, "A Model for Reform: China's Example Inspires Soviet Reformers", Far Eastern Economic Review, May 25, 1989, p. 16.

[3]Jonathan D. Spence, "Introduction" in Han Minzhu, (Ed.), Cries for Democracy: Writings and Speeches from the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. xv-xvi.

[4]Robert Shuter, in "The Centrality of Culture", Southern Communication Journal, 55, (1990), issues an earnest appeal for more extensive intracultural research. Similarly, Stephen E. Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies", Central States Speech Journal, 31, (1980), p. 265; calls for more extensive research in European, Asian, and African social movements; both needs which hopefully this essay will begin to address.

[5]Officially, Deng has resigned from all positions of power. But unofficially, his previous position as Chairman of the Party, as well as his influence, has secured for him the position as paramount leader, a fact that was made clear during the 1989 student uprising.

reform process, however, Deng and his political allies have faced resistance among Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials and cadres at all levels of the social hierarchy. The reason for this resistance is that in their attempt to revitalize economic growth, the reformers have proposed measures that resemble market-oriented capitalism, and thus the measures have been considered anathema to a political hierarchy committed to the tenets of classical Marxism. In order for Deng and the reformers to accomplish this profound societal change and re-structuration, it has been necessary to provide Chinese society with a unifying vision of society grounded in Marxist thought. This has been attempted through a redefinition of Marxism that would allow the implementation of the reforms. Moreover, the strategies used to provide this vision have powerfully illustrated the role of rhetoric in sustained societal change. This essay will explore the constraints on political discourse provided by Chinese culture in a manner such as presented by Lloyd Bitzer[6], examine the challenge before the reformers to justify the introduction of the reforms, and explore the ways in which a unifying vision was provided through the use of this rhetoric.

The Rhetorical Exigence

The proposition that a unifying vision must be present for the movement or change of Chinese society is not a new one. In China's past, whenever one dynasty was overthrown by another, the ideological justification of the "Mandate of Heaven" was given for the new rulers.[7] Indeed, Lam has noted that

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[6]Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation", Philosophy and Rhetoric, 1, (1968). It should be noted that Bitzer's concept of a rhetorical situation has been heavily criticized. Richard Vatz has argued that the situation does not create the response, but rather that the rhetor defines the situation. He also argues that meaning is not inherent in the situation, but the situation is given meaning by the rhetorical response of the rhetor. Although there may be no meaning inherent in an event, there are certainly situations in which there is an expectation on the part of an audience for meaning to be ascribed to the event.

[7]Hok-lam Chan, Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985; Lance Eccles, "The Seizure of the Mandate: Establishment of the Legitimacy of the Liang

"all Chinese rulers have been obsessed with ideology."[8] Throughout China's history, Chinese emperors and leaders have sought court philosophers who might provide this philosophical vision in order to give the ruler the justification to impose authority over the breadth of the Chinese nation. Furthermore, the idea that the leader is the source of correct doctrine is deeply rooted within Chinese culture.[9] With the establishment of the Peoples' Republic of China in 1949, this pattern became secularized, with Mao playing the role of the source of correct doctrine.[10] This might be contrasted with a certain pragmatism present in the political system of the United States, in which strict adherence to ideology is always somewhat suspect. In modern China, this vision is articulated to the people through the careful cultivation of a public orthodoxy, especially through required political meetings.[11]

However, the people to whom the reformers must appeal for the adoption and implementation of reform are the officials and cadres of the Chinese Communist Party. It is this group that has been at the forefront of most of the significant social movements in China, and is most responsible for the local implementation of national policy. Deng saw these cadres as primarily responsible for the failure in the early years of the reforms because of a lack of sincere follow-through. For example, in a 1982 address, he stated that previous policy decisions had been correct. However, "because the Party was not adequately prepared ideologically for all-round socialist construction

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Dynasty", Journal of Asian History, 23, 2, 1989, p. 169-180. The mandate of Heaven, or decree of Heaven, is understood as the sanction of Heaven upon the ruling dynasty.

[8]Willy Wo-Lap Lam, The Era of Zhao Ziyang, (Hong Kong: A.B. Books & Stationary Ltd., 1989), p. 30.

[9]S. R. Schram, "China After the 13th Congress" China Quarterly 14, (1988) pp. 178-197.

[10] See James T. Myers, "Whatever Happened to Chairman Mao? Myth and Charism in the Chinese Revolution" in Chinese Politics from Mao to Deng, ed. Victor C. Falkenheim (New York: Paragon House, 1989). See also, Ram Naresh Sharma, "Mao's Concepts of Power, Authority, and Legitimacy", China Report, 25, 2, 1989, 135-145; and Ralph Thaxton, China Turned Rightside Up: Revolutionary Legitimacy in the Peasant World (New Haven: Yala University Press, 1983).

[11]For a more complete analysis of the role of small group communication for the purposes of indoctrination, see Godwin Chu, Radical Change through Communication in Mao's China, (Honolulu, University Press of Hawaii, 1977).

at that time, that line and the many correct opinions put forward at that Congress were not adhered to in practice."[12] In order to bring about the type of cooperation needed from the cadres, a new understanding of China's development was needed, one that would provide a theoretical justification for the reform policies. At this point, it is important to explore the political context of the reforms, and then examine the rhetorical constraints inherent in Chinese political discourse.

Bitzer has defined the exigence of a rhetorical situation as "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be."[13] In contemporary China, two exigencies of this type can be identified; one is the presence of poverty, and the second is a sense of confusion over the incompatibility of theoretical models of economic development and reality. First, the most difficult problem facing the leaders of Chinese society has been the presence and persistence of poverty. The Marxist leaders of the 1949 Revolution promised a quick end to the cycles of poverty that continually besieged the nation, but after nearly forty years with a centrally-planned economy, there concinues to be a tremendous gap between theoretical models and the actual economic situation. As Ethridge has noted, "By the time Mao died, both the Soviet-style economy that inspired the Great Leap Forward and the Marxist model that Mao envisioned in his later years had been tried, and both had blighted the country with chaos and stagnation....Thus, there were many urgent reasons in 1978 for seeking a new way to deal with China's problems, even if the change meant a reinterpretation of its former understanding of Marxism."[14]

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[12]Deng Xiaopeng, Opening Speech, The Twelfth National Congress of the CPC, (Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1982), p. 2.
[13]Bitzer, p. 6.
[14]James M. Ethridge, China's Unfinished Revolution, (San Francisco: China books and Periodicals, 1990), p. 73.

The frustration was evident in a statement of Deng's that "poverty is not socialism...we must first rid ourselves of the socialism of poverty."[15] At another point, Deng stated "Poverty has nothing to do with socialism, still less with communism. The superiority of socialism should be manifested in the gradual improvement of the peoples' material life."[16] Deng regarded the presence of poverty in China as an ugly embarrassment to the rule of the Communist Party, and saw the elimination of poverty as a preeminent goal of the reforms.

However, in order to eliminate the poverty, a second exigence was introduced; that is, the incompatibility of orthodox Marxism with the reform program instituted by Deng, which was characterized by elements such as a market-oriented economy and the rise of entrepreneurship. Although Deng and others repeatedly stressed that the introduction of capitalistic measures would not necessitate the nation becoming purely capitalistic, and that socialist public ownership would always be the mainstay of the Chinese economy, these elements of reform were greatly distrusted by those within the party who remained staunchly Leftist and committed to the traditional Marxist orthodoxy. As Dittmer has noted, "The problem arises when a sizable private sector-and-market mechanism is introduced into a planned economy. In part it is a problem of definition and identity: What is capitalist? What is socialist? How far can the reforms go without trespassing the line of demarcation?"[17]

The reformers within the party felt that this sense of confusion was primarily responsible for the lack of progress of the reforms. One party

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[15]Scram, p. 180.
[16]Asian Recorder, September 2-8, 1984.
[17]Dittmer, p. 62.

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voice stated, "In the last eight years, despite genuine progress, numerous problems have arisen because of inexperience, lack of understanding of the reforms on the part of the people, and hidebound thinking."[18] Until this confusion could be resolved, the reform policies were at a standstill.

Because of these strong situational exigencies, it became increasingly important for the reformers to rhetorically account for these incongruities and to provide justification for the continuance of the reforms given the constraints provided by the situation. As Bitzer has argued, "rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem".[19] The reform faction responded to this need with a rhetoric of definition to justify the reforms. By a rhetoric of definition, I mean the use of rhetorical definition to alter widely held perceptions, understandings, or assumptions, or, in Bitzer's words, to "change reality through the mediation of thought and action."[20] A rhetoric of definition can attempt to change the beliefs, attitudes, or common understandings of the audience either through redefinition of an existing reality or by providing a common understanding of reality. As Vatz has noted, "situations obtain their character from the rhetoric which surrounds them."[21] A rhetoric of definition acts upon a situation to give it its character and to provide a common understanding of a rhetorical situation.

The sense of confusion among the people of China regarding the reforms was a result of a common understanding of reality based upon classical Marxism, as interpreted by the Chinese Communist Party, and reinforced by

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[18]Bian Fa, "Reform-China's Second Revolution", China Reconstructs, Vol. xxxvi, #10, October, 1987, p. 19.
[19]Bitzer, p. 5.
[20]Bitzer, p. 4.
[21]Vatz, p. 59.

years of political indoctrination. By redefining or changing that understanding, the reformers could eliminate or at least diminish the sense of confusion, and get about the business of reform. As Lam has noted, the reformers "were gunning for nothing less than a metamorphosis in worldview."[22] The remainder of this essay will discuss some of the constraints provided by Chinese political culture, and then trace the rhetorical response of the reformers as they sought to achieve this metamorphosis within the Party. I will not attempt to fully detail all of the addresses in which the reformers attempted to redefine the existing reality in China, but will instead try to explain in broad strokes how one key address; specifically, Zhao Ziyang's address to the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1987, served as a rhetorical keystone in the political and economic goals of the reformers.

Chinese Rhetorical Constraints

Bitzer has identified as the constituents of a rhetorical situation the exigence, the audience, and the constraints which influence the audience.[23] The next part of this discussion will examine more closely some of the constraints upon political discourse in China that have the power to "constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence".[24] I wish to extend the definition of constraint to include patterns of behavior that are common to a culture, and are passed on through the general transference of culture across generations. In the context of Chinese political culture, I will argue that a constraint exists which prevents rhetors from action that is seen as contradictory to the established patterns of the past.

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[22]Lam, p. 22.
[23]Bitzer, p. 6.
[24]Bitzer, p. 8.

As Crump and Dreher have noted, political discourse during the Warring Kingdoms Period placed a great value on "loyalty to the legitimate emperor...and the reverent observance of the advice of great men of the past."[25] The appeal to past authority probably had its origin in the teaching of Confucius, who spent his life urging the people to emulate the virtues of a kingdom that might or might not have ever existed, and this appeal continues to be a vital part of political discourse. Thus a constraint upon any rhetorical strategy used is that it must demonstrate a loyalty to "correct" thought while still incorporating the elements of change which the politician hopes to introduce.

This constraint manifests itself in Chinese political rhetoric by an unwillingness to criticize those in power and by a tremendous insistence that the ideas being advocated are not new ones; rather, they are merely the logical implications of the theories of the major theorists of Chinese Marxism: Marx, Lenin, and Mao.[26] Thus, in a political address, Deng himself, as the current leader of China, consistently relies on quotes from Mao, and lesser leaders rely on quotes from Deng, in order to show how their words do not differ substantially from those of Deng himself.

This is not to say that there is never a change in the grounding of authority. When a ruler's status has grown to a point of overtaking that of the older rulers, there will be a change in the authority that is cited for legitimation. For example, immediately after the death of Mao Zedong, Hua Kuo-feng became the Chairman of the CCP. However, his status was not such

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[25] J. I. Crump and J. J. Dreher. "Peripatetic Rhetors of the Warring Kingdoms". Central States Speech Journal 2:2 (1951) pp. 15-16.

[26] However, after someone has fallen from power, they will often be used as a scapegoat (in Burke's term) for the failures of past policy. This is especially exemplified by the fall of the Gang of Four and the official recognition of the disastrous results of the Cultural Revolution. See, for example, Rethinking the Cultural Revolution. (Beijing: Beijing Review Publications, 1987).

that he was seen as the fountain of doctrine. Therefore, his speeches extensively quoted Mao Zedong, thereby building upon Mao's authority.[27] But Zhao Ziyang, speaking nine years later, after Deng had built up his status as chairman, paid greater homage to Deng Xiaopeng, while still stressing that China would never depart from Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought. Deng's status by that time had grown to the point where it was possible to criticize some of Mao's theory, but not to the point that Mao had no relevance to the discussion.

A related aspect of this constraint on Chinese political rhetoric is the necessity for theoretical grounding. Changes in policy must be dictated by Marxist theory, and there is never any room for deviation. This constraint also dictates that the fundamental truth of Marxism and the role of the party in China never be questioned.[28] Deng himself has demonstrated his intolerance of anyone who criticizes the fundamentals of the Chinese political system by his willingness to sacrifice leaders and intellectuals after periods of political upheaval.[29] Thus for the reformers, there is a tremendous tension between the policies of Deng Xiaopeng and the orthodoxy that has been in place for so long. Deng's status has not reached the point where he can disregard the teachings of Marx and Mao, so he must attribute the reform policies themselves to the theories of Marx and Mao in order to gain wide acceptance.

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[27]See, for example, Hua Kuo-feng, "Political Report to the Eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China", Documents of the Eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1977), pp. 1-112; and "Unite and Strive to Build a Modern, Powerful Socialist Country", Documents of the First Session of the Fifth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1978), pp. 1-118.

[28]For example, the official verdict of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission following the 1989 demonstrations was that "party members who deviated from the *correct political stand* and violated the party's discipline...should be strictly punished....including expelling them from the party" Los Angeles Times, p. 1, June 26, 1989. (italics mine)

[29]Harding, p. 92. When student demonstrations have caused Deng's reforms to come into question, he has responded by allowing those reformers closest to him be taken from office. This is the case of Hu Yaobang in 1987 and Zhao Ziyang in 1989. It could be argued that Deng is only protecting the fate of the reforms, but it is more likely Deng wants to allow no possibility of moving beyond the dictatorship of the party.

A second constraint of Chinese political rhetoric is due to a cultural emphasis on harmony, both in interpersonal relationships as well as in political and cultural institutions. For this reason, open discussion of division or factionalism is rare in Chinese politics, as the party wants to maintain an aura of unity and harmony.[30] However, especially with the advent of the policies of the economic reform, factionalism and disharmony have been a pattern of the political climate.[31] Most of the controversy has involved clashes between the reform faction of Deng Xiaopeng and the more conservative Party members that have traditionally held power in Chinese politics. This constraint is rhetorically manifested by a refusal to acknowledge differences of opinion within the party leadership. Any official recognition of differing perspectives will be noted as due to an inadequate understanding of theory.

Marxism Redefined

With an understanding of these rhetorical constraints upon Chinese political rhetoric, I will now discuss the specific attempts at redefinition by the reformers. The first of these was an address by Deng Xiaopeng at the Twelfth National Congress of the CCP in September of 1982 entitled "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics". The address not only served as a major official policy statement regarding the reforms but also provided a political slogan, "socialism with Chinese characteristics", that would serve as a guiding force in building an understanding of the reforms among the populace of China.

In this address, Deng showed the first signs of backing away from a dogmatic application of orthodox Marxism by pointing out the limitations of

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[30]One of the consequences of the 1989 student demonstrations was the exposure of factionalism within the ranks of leadership, which caused some to speculate that China was on the brink of civil war. Los Angeles Times, p. 1, June 6, 1989.

[31]Lam, p. 9.

classical Marxist theory, specifically that Marxism did not contain all of the answers to China's problems. Deng stated "mechanical copying and application of foreign experience and models will get us nowhere....To integrate the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete realities of China, blaze a path of our own and build socialism with Chinese characteristics-this is the basic conclusion we have reached in summing up long, historical experience."[32]

An elaboration of this slogan is found in a February, 1985, article in Red Flag, the Party's theoretical journal and a principle source of party thought. The article stated that while the fundamental principles of Marxism were correct, not all elements of Marxism were.[33] Without denying the validity, or the core truths, of Marxism, this new doctrine stated that the Chinese version of Marxism is inevitably bound to be different from what Marx had envisioned. Marx could not have fully envisioned Chinese socialism because he did not experience the Chinese situation. Thus, China's model for economic development is no longer a dogmatic understanding of Marxism, but rather a modified Marxism developed and integrated with the actual social conditions in China. In this address, the role of Marxism in China is redefined. Marxism itself is still considered a "universal truth" in keeping with the constraint of loyalty, but the manifestation of that truth in China is different than in other socialist nations.

It is important to note that Mao himself had talked of sinicizing Marxism, and stressed that China should not have to answer to any other nation for their interpretation of Marxism. However, Mao's version of socialism with Chinese characteristics was probably more of an attempt to justify political

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[32]Deng, p. 3.
[33]Asian Recorder, April 9-15, 1985. Regd. No. D-(c)-92 vol xxxi, no. 15.

and strategic breakage with the Soviet Union than it was an attempt to alter fundamental Marxist tenets.[34]

The importance of Deng's redefinition is that now the reformers were free to look beyond classical Marxism for policy. They were no longer accountable to the classical understandings of Marxism for ideas on ways to stimulate economic development. Up to this point, accountability to Marxist theory had served as a leash which prevented the theorists from straying too far from the anchor of previous theorists. Reforms that were never dreamed of by Marx, Lenin, or Mao could now be appropriated as needed, without apology to Marx or the Communist Party.

The key address, though, in the implementation of the reforms occurred at the 13th Party Congress in October of 1987, and like Deng's earlier speech, was quickly disseminated throughout the nation. At this Congress, Zhao Ziyang made a keynote speech that underlined the theoretical underpinnings of the economic reform.[35] In his address, Zhao paid homage to the leaders and the theorists of the past by noting that China is a socialist society and that the nation must never deviate from that socialism.[36] The key element of the speech, however, is that China is only in the primary stage of socialism, and thus Chinese society can not be expected to fully encapsulate all of the characteristics of a fully developed socialistic state, thus giving an explanation for the continued presence of poverty in China.[37] Furthermore, the incompatibility of the new reforms with classical Marxism is addressed and explained using this same slogan:

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[34]Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China, (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1990), p. 584.
[35]Schram, p. 178; Hsiang Nai-kuang, "Commentary on "Early Stage of Socialism"" Asian Outlook, vol. 22, no. 12 (1987) pp. 17-19.
[36]Zhao, p. 10.
[37]Zhao, p. 6.

> A correct understanding of the present historical stage of Chinese society is of prime importance for building socialism with Chinese characteristics, and it is the essential basis on which to formulate and implement a correct line and correct policies.....Under the specific historical conditions of contemporary China.....to believe that it is possible to jump over the primary stage of socialism, in which the productive forces are to be highly developed, is to take a utopian position on this question, and that is the major cognitive root of "Left" mistakes.[38]

To fully explain the significance of this new slogan, "the primary stage of socialism", it is necessary to explore the evolution of society as envisioned by Marx and understood by Chinese economic theorists. In this understanding, socialism is brought about by stages, through the development of a higher order of civilization on top of an older, inferior order.[39] During these stages, certain elements develop in a society that enable it to move on to the next stage, most notably economic elements. For example, in the Soviet Union, as in most other socialist nations, the productive forces (means of production; or all industrial and commercial forces) were fully developed during the stage of capitalism which preceded the Communist revolutions of those nations. But China attempted to jump from a semi-colonial, semi-feudal state into a fully developed socialist state, when in actuality socialism can only be attained through a procession of stages,

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[38]Zhao, p. 10
[39]Zhao, p. 10.

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stages that have to be endured in order to pave the way for the later implementation of socialism.[40]

Zhao further developed Deng's theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics by explaining that the formation of a socialist state in a nation like China is something that has never been done before, and something that Marx and Engels never foresaw. Thus the rules describing how it is to be achieved elsewhere don't apply on the Chinese mainland. Without denigrating or belittling the value of Marxism, Zhao explained:

> We cannot blindly follow what the books say, nor can we mechanically imitate the examples of other countries. Rather, proceeding from China's actual conditions and integrating the basic principles of Marxism.... we must find a way to build socialism with Chinese characteristics through practice.[41]

With this disclaimer, Zhao again stressed that there is nothing inherently flawed in Marxism, or the way that Marxism has been applied in other nations, but rather that Marxism must be applied to the actual historical, economic, and cultural situation of a nation in order to bring about a socialist state, and that in this way, through practice rather than dogma, Marxism will come to its fullest fruition.

Zhao repeatedly stressed the correctness of Marxism and met the demand of the constraint of loyalty by emphasizing that the theoretical developments are completely in line with Marxism. "Nine years practice has proved that our Party is truly a great, glorious and correct party and that the line

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[40]Zhao, p. 10-11.
[41]Zhao, p. 12.

followed....is a correct Marxist line."[42] Furthermore, those who do not understand that the primary stage is an essential one are doomed to repeat "leftist mistakes", and by implication, have an immature understanding of socialism, thus providing an account for opinions that vary from that of the reformers, while refusing to note that the disharmony in the party is due to differences in mature interpretation of Marxist theory.[43]

Furthermore, Zhao pointed out that this primary stage would probably take at least 100 years, or until the middle of the twenty-first century to complete. Thus Zhao not only justified the extension of reform measures, but he also gave the reforms half a century to bring about the changes which he envisioned, and turns the constraint of loyalty upon those who disagreed with him by pointing out that they would be guilty of "incorrect" thought. Interestingly enough, this time frame also coincides with the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong, and thus provides theoretical grounding for the "One country, two systems" doctrine which guarantees Hong Kong's autonomy and capitalistic way of life for fifty years after the takeover. With this speech, Zhao rhetorically justified the introduction of a western-style market-oriented economy to contemporary Chinese society by identifying and defining previously unidentified historical forces. The reformers presented a reason for China's lack of development, and a theoretical basis for the reforms which were meant to alleviate the conditions which the nation had heretofore been unable to shake off, thus responding to the exigencies present in the society.

The significance of this redefinition is illustrated by the response of critics in Taiwan, who quickly identified the theoretical development as a new

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[42]Zhao, p. 6.
[43]Zhao, p. 10.

name for an old notion, revisionism.[44] Revisionism is the name given to those who attempted to alter the fundamentals of Marxism in order to maintain capitalism in China during the 1950's and 60's. As such, revisionism is "incorrect thought" to the theorists on the mainland, and those who held to it, or were accused of holding to it, were severely disciplined or punished, especially during the period of the cultural revolution. Thus, to the critics on the island of Taiwan, Zhao's advancement of the concept of the primary stage of socialism is just a "theoretical excuse."[45] The reformers, in a sense, have given a new name to thought that was considered heretical, and have made it the new orthodoxy, without overthrowing the old orthodoxy. However, the key distinction is that the new revisionism has found its grounding in orthodoxy, and is no longer "heretical".

Nor was the definitional nature of the new development lost on the Taiwanese; "this definition is a theoretical weapon for power struggle to oppose the Leftists and is used as a countermeasure to open up and reform."(*sic*)[46] In other words, the definition is a rhetorical strategy to give the revisionist reform measures an official blessing. What is significant about the Taiwanese response is that it centers on defining the reforms as revisionism, and identifying them with the revisionism of previous decades, which would question the basis of the reforms. In other words, the Taiwanese critics sought to fight definition with definition; to counter the re-definition of the reformers by providing another definition that, if recognized, would discredit the reforms.

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[44]Hsiang, pp 17-19.
[45]Hsiang, p. 18.
[46]Hsiang p. 18.

Western observers also have noted the significance of the new understanding brought about by the rhetorical redefinition. Schram (1988) describes "the primary stage of socialism" as a "term which is taken to evoke the whole range of characteristics defining this existing reality."[47] It has also been noted that the theoretical development of the primary stage of socialism is "the key to understand.... the coming political structural reforms."[48] Through the reformers' rhetorical strategy of redefining the existing theoretical framework, the reformers had, at least temporarily, met the demands of the constraint of loyalty inherent in Chinese political rhetoric, and thus were able to implement new reforms that would not have been ideologically "correct" before the new understanding. Within two months, the "broad commitment to economic reform was no longer at issue among the party members."[49] Thus, at least for the short term, the definitions provided by the reformers provided the impetus needed for the continuance of the reform policies.

Even beyond their value as policy declarations, it must be remembered that both of these theoretical developments; "the primary stage of socialism" and "socialism with Chinese characteristics", took on a life of their own as popular slogans. These slogans became watchwords throughout the nation as the definition of what was acceptable economic stewardship.

It is apparent that rhetorical redefinition provided the basis from which to continue to implement the reforms. However, these slogans have not been able to sustain the reforms much further. The redefinitions were able to bridge the gap between classical Marxism and certain capitalistic reforms, but

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[47]Schram, p. 177.
[48]Los Angeles Times October 24, 1987. Section I, pg. 8.
[49]Andrew J. Nathan, "Politics: Reform at the Crossroad", in Anthony J. Kane, ed. China briefing: 1989, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), p. 7.

soon the reforms came to the point of no return, when there was no longer any possibility of compatibility between the reforms and Marxism. Nathan has stated that the reforms became stagnant when it became apparent that "official ideology would have to be thoroughly overhauled to find a way to justify what is essentially an abandonment of socialism in favor of private ownership."[50] Marxism itself would have to be discarded in order to continue the reform policies. In other words, the constraint of loyalty to the past thinkers and theories has prevented the Chinese leadership from being able to redefine the reforms so that true reform, economic and political, might be made possible.

Thus this rhetorical constraint of loyalty to great men and to Marxist doctrine has prevented the rhetoric of change from altering the basic structures of Chinese society. This is especially apparent when one reflects upon the ill-fated pro-democracy movements which sought to push the reforms into areas of political reform. This example provides tremendous insight into Chinese political legitimation, and it becomes apparent that any profound societal change to occur in China will have to be legitimized by its relationship to "official thought."

When contrasted with the reforms that have swept over Eastern Europe in the last two years, the significance of the cultural constraints on Chinese political discourse is highlighted. In several formerly Communist states, the new governments have gone to great lengths to distance themselves from Marxism and even the Soviet Union has implemented policies that fly in the face of classical Marxism. A major difference between the Chinese example and the Eastern European examples is that since the Europeans felt no need to identify

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[50]Nathan, p. 17.

reform movements as being derived from Marxist theory, they were able to completely alter their societies.

Thus, the power of the cultural constraint is tremendously significant in contemporary Chinese political rhetoric. The Chinese emphasis on "correctness" in ideology has brought about an impasse in the ability of the reformers to fully implement all of the designs of the reformers. Deng Xiaopeng and the reform movement in China have attempted to redefine Marxism in China, but have not yet been able to counter the authority of Marx himself. The authority of Marxist theory developed over the years since the 1949 revolution which brought the CCP to power still serves as the dominant ideology and any future challenge to the status quo in China will either have to demonstrate a linkage to this theory or overcome the theory's stronghold on Chinese society.